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WITH POWERS (400)

NEW YORK, FEB. 11 (AP)—ONLY HIS WIFE AND A FEW HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS KNEW THAT ATTORNEY JAMES B. DONOVAN WAS INVOLVED IN THE PRISONER EXCHANGE OF FRANCIS GARY POWERS AND RUDOLF ABEL.

NO ONE, INCLUDING HIS FOUR CHILDREN, WONDERED ABOUT HIS TRIP ABROAD, BECAUSE HE FREQUENTLY DID SO FOR REGULAR BUSINESS REASONS.

THE EXCHANGE OF THE AMERICAN U-2 PILOT AND THE RUSSIAN SPY DATES BACK TO LATE IN 1960, WHEN MRS. ABEL WROTE TO DONOVAN--PENDING HER HUSBAND IN THE ESPIONAGE TRIAL--ASKING IF HE COULD GET CLEMENCY FOR ABEL.

THAT YEAR OLIVER W. POWERS, FATHER OF THE PILOT WROTE SUGGESTING THAT HE WOULD SEEK U.S. PERMISSION TO EXCHANGE HIS SON TO ABEL.

DONOVAN NOTIFIED THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT OF MRS. ABEL'S LETTER, AND HIS OFFICE SUGGESTED MRS. ABEL ADDRESS HER APPEAL TO PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY AFTER HE OFFICIALLY TOOK OFFICE. DONOVAN KEPT THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INFORMED OF OTHER LETTERS HE RECEIVED FROM MRS. ABEL.

SIX WEEKS AGO DONOVAN WAS AUTHORIZED TO GO TO EAST AFRICA AND EXPLORE THE SITUATION. THE 5-YEAR-OLD ATTORNEY CARRIED WITH A LETTER FROM REED COZENS, PARDON ATTORNEY FOR THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT. THE LETTER INDICATED THAT "UNDER PROPER CIRCUMSTANCES" ABEL'S SENTENCE MIGHT BE COMMUTED.

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